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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 007182

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SUBJECT: TOGO: FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR'S OCTOBER 26
MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR DUNN

Classified By: Acting DCM Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Presidential Africa Advisor Michel de Bonnecorse on October 26 said that the recently announced Togolese government was a "reasonable formula," in a meeting with transiting Ambassador David Dunn. He characterized Gilchrist Olympio, his UFC associates, and other non-participants in the new government as "extreme," and expressed his belief that the UFC could split into "moderate" and "extremist" factions. Ambassador Dunn cautioned that Olympio and the UFC remained important factors and that he saw no evidence yet of a split. Bonnecorse viewed Faure favorably, and said that he could be a good president for a long time. Both Ambassador Dunn and the French agreed that the June 2007 elections and how they would be held would be important indicators of the direction Togo would take. Moving forward on elections would help facilitate the resumption of EU assistance. Participation in elections monitoring by the U.S., the EU, and other outsiders would be important. Equally important would be post-election reform of the army, which should return to military duties and leave internal security to enhanced civilian or gendarme-like institutions. END SUMMARY.

"REASONABLE FORMULA"

¶2. (C) U.S. Ambassador to Togo David Dunn and Embassy Africa Watchers met on October 26 with Presidential Africa Advisor Michel de Bonnecorse and his deputy, Jacques Champagne de Labriolle. Bonnecorse began by noting that 18 months after the post-Eyadema elections in Togo, the Faure regime had presented a "reasonable formula" that included most political actors, with the exception of the "most extreme," including Gilchrist Olympio, his UFC allies, and other non-participants whom Bonnecorse believed fell in that category.

¶3. (C) Bonnecorse expressed the view that the UFC could split into "moderate" and "extremist" factions, with the former more willing to cooperate with the Faure regime and the latter (the Olympio camp) continuing to withhold cooperation. Bonnecorse believed that the June 2007 legislative elections would be a key indicator of Togo's direction, and the UFC split might take place in anticipation of the elections. The June elections would be important in terms of how they would be conducted and their results. Would they be free and fair, and risk the end of RPT dominance? Or would they be "controlled," with the RPT remaining in power regardless of the will of the electorate?

¶4. (C) Ambassador Dunn said that he was not aware of a split within the UFC, but Bonnecorse said that it appeared likely. Labriolle noted generational changes in Togo, with

Olympio viewed as an "old chief." Ambassador Dunn said that the UFC seemed the strongest opposition element but evidence was admittedly anecdotal, in the absence of any legitimate elections in recent memory. The legislative elections would help determine its true strength. Olympio retained a certain cachet, which was important. However, it was quite possible that some of Olympio's fire had gone out with Eyadema's death. His key associates appeared loyal both inside and outside Togo. Ambassador Dunn commented on Eric Amerding's closeness to Olympio and the confidence Olympio placed in him. Bonnetcorse observed that Amerding, like Olympio, was "not really Togolese either." If Olympio ever became president, Bonnetcorse predicted that Amerding would be his foreign minister.

"A GOOD PRESIDENT FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS"

15. (C) Bonnetcorse said that Togo had been moving in a "more or less" favorable direction, with the Faure regime marginalizing "extremists," cooperating with Burkina Faso President Compaore's efforts, and responding to outside pressure, including that of the U.S. Faure had also demonstrated that he was a more enlightened leader than his father. Relatively well educated and exposed to the outside world, Faure was aware of good governance, Bonnetcorse noted. Faure could be "a good president for a number of years, with the Togolese people viewing him as a balancer," Bonnetcorse observed.

OLYMPIO, UFC STILL IMPORTANT FACTORS

16. (C) Ambassador Dunn acknowledged that developments over the past 18 months were more substantially positive than one might have expected after Eyadema's death. However, things could sour, and the June legislative elections would, as

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Bonnetcorse noted, be an important step. The challenge was to keep Togo on track regarding democratization. Gilchrist Olympio and the UFC remained important factors, if only for the financial resources they could provide, and should not be discounted, he advised. The UFC continued to develop a following among the young and was viewed by the GOT as the most serious opposition element.

17. (C) Discussion turned to Olympio, with Ambassador Dunn pointing out his continuing influence and Bonnetcorse noting his equivocation and his more European than Togolese outlook and background. Olympio would always seek legal and constitutional changes that would allow him to run, even if he did not intend to do so, Bonnetcorse believed. This would allow him to claim a moral victory over the Gnassingbes and keep the door open. Returning to the issue of an "out of touch" Olympio, Bonnetcorse noted his relatively opulent lifestyle and uncertainty about his sources of income.

DATE FOR ELECTIONS FACILITATES EU AND IFI ENGAGEMENT

18. (C) Ambassador Dunn provided documentation indicating that legislative elections would take place on June 24, 2007, news that pleased Bonnetcorse. An official date for elections, he indicated, would facilitate a resumption of EU engagement and financial assistance. He mentioned in passing that the Germans now seemed willing to move forward. Ambassador Dunn noted progress Togo has made with the IMF and the possibility of debt relief if the GOT maintained its forward momentum. These developments augured well for Togo's still very fragile economy. Bonnetcorse said that giving a date for the elections would likely have a calming effect. He said that the U.S., France, and other partners would have to watch the elections process closely to avoid slippage. He and Ambassador noted good cooperation between the U.S. and French missions in Lome and both agreed it should continue. More broadly, Labriolle stressed the need to end Togo's isolation and to support its economy. He noted the risk of Togo's becoming a criminalized state, with drug trafficking,

which had not existed previously, on the rise.

¶9. (C) In response to Labriolle's hope that the U.S. would be involved in elections monitoring, Ambassador Dunn said that the U.S. was likely to play a role. He noted the role of a number of NGOs (e.g., Carter Center, NDI, IRI) in elections monitoring and preparations and their likely interest in Togo. Labriolle stressed the importance of early involvement and not waiting until the weeks just before the vote. Ambassador Dunn hoped that the EU would send a robust monitoring team to Togo, and he noted the EU's positive role in previous elections in Africa. Bonnetcorse said that France would raise Togo's elections in discussions at the EU in Brussels.

TOGO'S ARMY AND THE NEED FOR REFORM

¶10. (C) Bonnetcorse emphasized the need to reform Togo's army, which he said should be a post-election priority. Faure had agreed on the need for a more balanced army in terms of ethnic representation, but problems existed. One challenge would be to help develop a civilian security capability, which would allow the army to focus on military tasks and not on police or internal security tasks, which might best be performed by the gendarmerie. Bonnetcorse thought that an ethnically balanced, 2,500 member gendarmerie or internal security force could be sufficient. Ambassador Dunn noted that U.S. laws made it easier to assist in military reform than engage in internal security training. He said that member of the Togolese defense establishment had raised with him the subject of recruiting more southerners into the army, to counterbalance the dominance of northern ethnicities. Bonnetcorse repeated the need to limit the army to military tasks -- "we don't want them running the ports, customs services, or out in the streets" -- a view Ambassador Dunn shared. Ambassador Dunn remarked that ethnic relations in Togo were better than in a number of other countries. There was less bitterness and hatred directed at the army than in some countries, and refugees were returning.

¶11. (C) COMMENT: Bonnetcorse's assessment that the UFC will split and fade from the political scene may be attributable to wishful thinking, given the rocky relationship that has existed for years between the UFC and GOF. This view carries implicit risks. One of the biggest threats to smooth (and fair) elections next year will be lack of agreement and public bickering between the UFC and Togolese government concerning the electoral process, and ignoring the problem will not make it go away. END COMMENT.

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¶12. (C) Ambassador Dunn has cleared this message.

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